

**Abstract 142**

**TITLE:** Quality Assurance of HIV Counseling, Testing, and Referral Services: Where Do We Start?

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**ISSUE:** Research shows that HIV counseling, testing, and referral (CTR). when presented in a client-centered manner that is tailored to the individual and specific needs of each client, is an effective method of risk reduction and HIV prevention. Many public and private agencies, clinics and community-based organizations offer HIV CTR services to clients in their communities without assessing the quality of the services provided. It is necessary to develop a mechanism to determine if the provided services maintain a high standard of service as well as meet the needs of the client and the goals of the program(s).

**SETTING:** The quality assurance evaluation tool is intended for use by public and/or private providers that offer HIV CTR in clinics or agencies.

**PROJECT:** A diverse group of HIV/AIDS prevention providers who are actively involved in the Colorado community planning process. *Coloradans Working Together (CWT)*, expressed the need for quality assurance guidelines for agencies providing CTR services. In response, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) hosted "*Assuring the Quality of HIV Prevention Counseling (AQHPC)*" course, and developed the "*HIV CTR Site Evaluation Process & Guidelines Manual*". The evaluation process strives to ensure several items: 1) CTR sites understand the purpose behind and importance of the evaluation process, 2) Contractual responsibilities of the CTR sites are clearly defined and understood by all parties, 3) Agencies are motivated to strive for improvement, and 4) the process is user-friendly.

**RESULTS:** The "*HIV CTR Site Evaluation Process & Guidelines Manual*" has been created and utilized with several CTR sites in Colorado. The site evaluation process has identified areas where realistic, incremental planning on the part of individual counselors and agencies has been necessary for improvement in the quality of services offered to clients.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** It is known that program evaluation and quality assurance are necessary components of successful HIV prevention programs. CDPHE's experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary to request input and feedback from providers as an evaluation/quality assurance tool is created. Their buy-in with the process is essential. Therefore, not only are the services provided to clients offered in a client-centered manner, the evaluation procedure itself reflects the needs of the agency and providers who offer the services.

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